INCREASING AFRICAN WOMEN'S PRODUCTIVITY

A Seven-project Package

Regional Bureau for Africa

C. Martí/UNDP

Bringing in the harvest is one of the many tasks of African women. They work up to 18 hours a day.

The burdens of African women – and their contributions to their families, communities and countries' economies – are now widely acknowledged. Throughout the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985) and beyond, numerous conferences and studies have called attention to the great number of tasks these women perform and the fact that their efforts are barely reflected in national statistics.

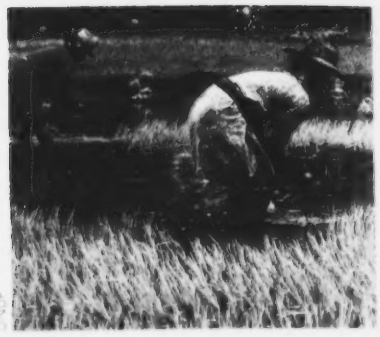
The facts have been repeated time and time again:

African women produce 50 to 80 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's food but have little access to agricultural machinery, improved seeds, fertilizers and training in better growing techniques.

They work up to 18 hours a day, hauling water and fuelwood, caring for their homes and families, and producing items to sell for income, as well as toiling in the fields.

They head one third of all African households.

African planners have come to recognize that women make very valuable contributions to their countries' economies, as well as in the social sphere. This reality is not forgotten as they cope with the problems of restructuring African economies and endeavor to increase food production, train national personnel and carry out the other objectives of the African Priority Programme for Eco-



Tending crops, preparing meals and pounding grain are among African women's chores.

nomic Recovery, adopted by the Organization for African Unity in 1985. It is realized that a key element – increasing productivity – must include increasing the productivity of women.

But there are still formidable constraints to be overcome before women are fully involved in development programmes and projects:

Deep-rooted traditions and biases favour men's access to new technologies and other innovations.

National statistics, upon which development plans and programmes are based, do not yet fully reflect women's activities.

Development professionals are often not trained to recognize women's productive roles, or to plan and implement programmes addressing them.

Women are frequently neither consulted in the planning nor involved in the implementation of projects affecting their lives.

Women's onerous workloads leave them little time or energy to participate in beneficial programmes such as literacy classes, training in income-generating skills, or health education.

Governments tend to relegate women's concerns to "women's bureaux," which are often poorly equipped to handle them alone.

The unfavourable economic climate in Africa, and worldwide, works against undertaking new and creative development initiatives.

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WID PACKAGE

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Regional Bureau for Africa, is supporting a series of seven projects to assist African governments in overcoming these constraints. The Women in Development (WID) package is designed to raise the productivity of African women in key development sectors in which they play a leading role – agriculture, drinking water supply and sanitation, energy and the informal sector – and to increase their access to credit and scientific and technical education. UNDP is providing US$14.4 million for the seven projects. Their strategy is two-fold. On the one hand, they are testing development activities which take a grass-roots approach and involve African women in assessing their own needs and planning and implementing solutions they devise. On the other, they are communicating the results of these experiences to African government officials and donors on the front-line of decision-making.

The goal is to provide policy-makers and planners with simple and practical guidelines for the development of national programmes to increase women's productivity.

Technologies like this maize mill ease women's food processing burdens.

Pilot projects are being carried out simultaneously in selected countries. This makes it possible to do comparative evaluations and promotes a sharing of experiences. Activities are implemented in collaboration with international agencies and non-governmental organizations with considerable knowledge and experience. Workshops and seminars afford an opportunity for many African countries to gain from results achieved.

All projects have joint steering committees, chaired by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa, which supervise and monitor activities-in-progress.

Pottery-making is one of many income-earning activities for which women need training and credit.

WID PROJECTS

Credit Support System for Productive Activities of Women

Lacking collateral, African women generally find it impossible to obtain credit to purchase the improved seeds, fertilizers and equipment they need to improve the productivity of their farming or cottage industries. Based on experiences with indigenous, non-traditional credit systems in some countries, viable schemes for providing loans to African women in the lower-income segments of society are being developed and tested.

Participating countries: Burkina Faso, Congo, Gambia, Zambia

Executing Agency: UNDP's Office for Project Services (OPS) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

UNDP contribution: US$2,739,000

Improving African Women's Role in Informal Sector Production and Management

African women engage in many informal sector activities to earn income for their families, especially petty trading, dressmaking, tailoring, weaving, catering and food processing. But due to a lack of training and credit their productivity and earnings remain low. Policy analysis is being carried out, classes held for women entrepreneurs and statistics gathered to measure women's economic activities. This will give policy-makers and planners a better understanding of options and strategies for providing women with the

credit, training, marketing opportunities and technological guidance they need to improve their enterprises.

P articipating countries: Burkina Faso, Congo, Gambia, Zambia

E xecuting Agency: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in co-operation with the Organization for African Unity (OAU), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Statistical Office of the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and UNIFEM.

U NDP Contribution: US$2,583,000

Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services (PROWWESS/UNDP)

Water portage consumes six hours a day for some African women, robbing them of time and energy that could be used for more productive tasks. This project is increasing the role of women in local communities in the planning, use and maintenance of improved low-cost water supply and sanitation systems. Women are involved in decision-making and management at all stages. Collaborating water sector agencies are strengthening their abilities to carry out participatory, community-based projects. Policy-makers and project managers are being advised on how to obtain meaningful community involvement.

P articipating countries: Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe

E xecuting Agency: OPS, in collaboration with the PROWWESS/UNDP interregional project, and government

Women plan, use and maintain low-cost water supply systems through PROWWESS/UNDP.

Ministries of Water and Sanitation, Health, Community or Social Development, and Women's Affairs.

U NDP contribution: US$1,075,074

F. Mosley/UNDP

Reforestation can help ease Africa's fuelwood crisis.

Improving Linkages Between Women and Energy Sector Policies, Programmes and Projects with Special References to New and Renewable Sources of Energy

Women are rarely included in the design, planning and implementation of energy programmes, even though they

are the prime users of household energy. They also spend long hours collecting firewood which, with charcoal, accounts for over 80 per cent of the fuel used in sub-Saharan African households. Policies are being stimulated to ensure women's involvement at all stages of energy projects, especially those developing cost-effective and sustainable technologies based on new and renewable sources of energy. Men and women are being trained to design, manage, evaluate and disseminate information on traditional and complementary energy systems geared to women's needs.

Participating countries: Burkina Faso, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Zambia

Executing Agency: OPS in collaboration with INSTRAW and Volunteers in Technical Assistance

UNDP contribution: US$1,521,000

Increasing Rural Women's Food Productivity Through Improved Agricultural Technology Transfer and Adoption in Africa

Technologies for more efficient land preparation, planting, weeding, plant protection, harvesting, and the transportation and processing of crops usually do not reach women farmers. This project will develop a method planners can use to assemble and disseminate "production packages," adapted to specific agro-ecological zones, for the major crops women cultivate. It will also strengthen the abilities of African institutions to encourage the transfer of suitable farming technologies to women producers. Activities are planned to start in 1992.

Participating countries (envisaged): Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Executing Agency: Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)

UNDP contribution: US$2,300,000

Raising Agricultural Productivity of Women for Increased Food Production

Some African countries have been successful in boosting women's food production. Based on an assessment of their experiences, governments will be advised on policies which provide stronger and more economically effective incentives to women farmers. They will also have an opportunity to assess successful methods for reaching women with extension services, credit and other resources they need to increase the productivity of their land and labour. A fuller sharing of experience and commitment to action to improve women's agricultural productivity within the region will be promoted, especially through relevant African institutions.

Participating countries: Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia

Executing Agency: The World Bank

UNDP contribution: US$780,000

Promotion of African Women in Scientific and Technical Fields

In most cases, only young boys and men now have access to scientific and technical education in Africa. Governments will be advised on how to ensure the access of girls and women to scientific and technical education, and promote opportunities for them to advance in scientific and technical fields. Guidance

Greater access to scientific and technical education will open up new opportunities for African women.

counsellors will be trained to encourage girls to study scientific and technical subjects. Fellowships and travel grants will be awarded to African women students and scientists. Activities are planned to begin in 1992.

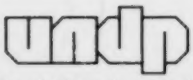
Participating countries: To be determined.

Executing Agency: ECA, in co-operation with Ministries of Education and government organizations responsible for women's affairs in African member states.

UNDP contribution: US$3,438,025

For further information contact:

Regional Programmes Division
Regional Bureau for Africa
United Nations Development Programme
P.O. Box 1608
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-1608



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